



No. COL.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 12, 1846.



ATELY passed Trinity Church, Paddington, which was consecrated about four months ago, and cost nearly 18,000*l.*, we observed men busily employed in pointing the joints of the parapets, and other portions of the masonry, and so were led to make an examination of the building. A glance inside showed us that a slip had taken place, especially at the east end, where the main arches on each side of the nave are broken; and that remedial measures had been adopted only just in time to prevent worse mischief,—even if the probability of this be yet removed.

The level of the ground on which the church stands, is a newly made one; and the building is raised on arches at considerable expense, to bring it up from what was thought solid ground. According to the newspaper paragraphs at the time of the consecration, above 2,000*l.* were spent in preparing the foundations.

Nevertheless they have failed—partially, at all events; and, therefore, it would be useful to know what were the measures actually employed, in what respect they proved inefficient, and what remedies have since been employed.

Perhaps the architect himself may think it worth while to give us this information. It is not asked for impertinently, but in the belief that such statements are very valuable.

From the days of Vitruvius upwards, the necessity of a good bottom for a building has been urged by most writers on architecture. Experience shews that reiteration is nevertheless desirable. The foundation is the most important of considerations,—unless a stable one be obtained, all that follows is vain. The provisions for rendering it secure are as much the duty of the architect, as the harmonious arrangement and artistic decoration of the building; and if he neglect the study of this and other branches of construction, he will find every work committed to his charge a source of annoyance and loss; and however brilliant his fancy, and pure his taste, may give up all hopes, under ordinary circumstances, of establishing a lasting reputation as an architect.

We do not make this remark in direct application to the architect of the church above mentioned, who is understood to be an experienced man, and to have given due consideration, as he thought, to the precautions required in this particular case; but are led to it by a cry now being raised, that a knowledge of construction is unnecessary for an architect,—architecture having its province merely in *appearance*. We had thought this injurious doctrine, which has done more to degrade the art in England than any other circumstance, was exploded long ago, and can scarcely persuade ourselves that it will be revived to any extent. The chief object of architecture is utility. We do not build simply for the production of beauty, but for occupation,—for use. Convenience, strength, fitness, are the first requirements in an edifice; decoration should follow, and grow out of these.

Structural propriety is a main element in

the production of beauty; all that we most admire in the works of both the classic and mediæval times, grew out of the constructional arrangements, by the application of taste and genius. A desire to produce beautiful forms did not lead to the introduction of columns, entablatures, or pediments; of flying buttresses, pinnacles, groined vaults or spires;—but the requirements of the building; and beauty resulted from the skill with which the structural wants were supplied and adorned. New wants and new difficulties led to new inventions and new beauties, which has never been the case where the converse mode has been pursued.

Space, to whom we lately referred, seldom failed to combat the error in question. Looking to our own notes of his lectures in 1835, we find him saying:—

“A knowledge of construction, which is unfortunately too little regarded, is most essential to the student; the ancients have given proof in their buildings, how highly esteemed and how well understood it was by them. Some modern author has said, that when the architect has conceived the design, all he has to do is to have the building raised as lightly, as cheaply, and as quickly as possible. Nothing can be more false; and had the ancients thought thus, we should not have for our study and admiration those glorious monuments of their skill which remain to us.”

Again, he urged,—“By a knowledge of construction, the architect is enabled to direct the artificers, instead of being directed by them, and to ascertain correctly the expense of his design. The duties of an architect require his entire attention: without a perfect knowledge of construction, unlimited command over his pencil, and an acquaintance with the quality and strength of the various materials, the most brilliant invention will be worse than useless, and can but bring dishonour to the architect, and disgrace to the profession.”

And then, at the close of the course, he said,—“Students should examine the construction of every building to which they can gain access; by attending even to the defective construction of speculators, they will see errors to be avoided,—they will gain a knowledge of light and shade, and store up new forms. They should read Scamozzi, Vignola, and the best authors, and by thus uniting theory and practice, if they do their duty steadily and resolutely, they would be admired and esteemed when living, and regretted when dead. The cure of defects is part of an architect's duty. The dry-rot, a noisome disease, was unknown till lately—what is the cause of it, he asked? A knowledge of this will suggest a remedy. To build a mansion was at one time a work of consideration; the walls were allowed to dry, and the timbers were well seasoned. Now, stone and timber are hurried from the quarry and forest; edifices are erected in a few months, which should have occupied years; damp is shut up in the walls, and thence the dry-rot and other evils. It is necessary the architect should have an acquaintance with these things: he has much more to do than making drawings.”

To say that construction is not architecture is unnecessary; but it is a main part of it. A man may have a knowledge of construction generally, and yet not be an architect: but no man is entitled to the rank of architect, or, indeed, is likely to obtain it, who is ignorant of construction. The greater includes the less. Further, it may be said, that he who simply understands construction, is nearer to being an architect, than he who can merely make an architectural drawing.

The doctrine which teaches that architecture has its province merely in *appearance*, and would separate design from construction, is an utter fallacy, full of danger.

A CHAT ABOUT KEYNSHAM AND BITTON.

We stopped the other day with our old friend John Britton, at the Keynsham Station, on the Great Western Railway, to pay a flying visit to Bitton Church, Gloucestershire, and found much to interest us. The floor of a room in the station-house is formed of a tessellated Roman pavement, which was discovered at Newton Saint Loe, when excavating for the line. It is 11 or 12 feet square, and represents Orpheus playing on his lyre with a circle of beasts around him, similar to one in Lord Bathurst's Park, at Cirencester, but is not of such good workmanship.

Keynsham Church has some parts of great beauty, especially the west end of the south aisle, with its stairs' turret, and deserves better treatment than it has received or is promised. The south porch has fallen into ruin, and it was gravely proposed a short time ago, to pull it down as the cheapest way of repairing it! Fortunately, a defender was found, and it is to be hoped he will succeed in inducing the parishioners to restore it.

“We love the ivy-mantled tower,
Rock'd by the storms of passing years;
The grave, whose melancholy flower
Was nourish'd by a martyr's tears.
Long be our Father's temple ours,
Woe to the hand by which it falls;
A thousand spirits watch its towers,
A host of angels guard its walls.”

Keynsham Church is remarkable for a perpendicular gable tower, rebuilt as late as the year 1612, at a cost of 230*l.* The details, as may be expected, are bad, but the general proportions are satisfactory. It has been usually described as of the late perpendicular period, and the writer of the “Church Notes,” in Bourne's fine work on the Great Western Railway (Mr. George Clarke), has fallen into the same mistake.

There are several interesting bits of domestic architecture in Keynsham, among which may be mentioned a street front, with a curious bay window of stone supported on two boldly sculptured half-length figures, in costume of early date.

At Saltford, by the way, a short distance from Keynsham, there is an old stone house (now occupied by Mr. Flowers;—we mention this as a guide for those who would seek it), the structure of which is Norman. A floor of oak treera (unplanned), and walls four feet thick explain its long duration. One semi-circular headed window, with zig-zag moulding round it remains, but the greater part of the exterior seems to have been modernized in the sixteenth century. A carved lion on the apex of the gable; an old door and hinges; a porch with a cross over the gable; a sculptured corbel near it; and a chimney-piece marked 1645, in one of the rooms, are the points which will attract a visitor's attention.

A very short ride from Keynsham brings you to Bitton Church, a fine structure, consisting of nave, chancel, north chapel, and tower. The foundation is Norman, and much of the structure of the church is of that date, but its general character is now perpendicular. The nave has Norman north and south doors (the latter is altered into a window) and the chancel arch has been restored recently, by the present excellent and enthusiastic vicar, the Rev. H. T. Ellacombe, also in the Norman style. The north chapel is a charming example of the transition from early English to decorated, and contains three handsome sedilia and a piscina. About twenty years ago, an incised stone, representing a cross-legged knight, was found on the south side of the nave. Investigation shewed that this was a memorial of Sir Thomas de Britton, of Bitton, who died in 1237, and was buried there; and over whose grave a chantry chapel had been erected in 1299. The stone is now preserved in a vestibule at the north entrance.

The tower of this church is very handsome: it is in three stages, with diagonal buttresses, carrying crocketed pinnacles in each stage.

St. Keyn's ham.